

This is, hopefully, the 60th consecutive year that Congress will pass the NDAA. In a time of intense partisanship and national division, it is a true testament to the significance of this responsibility and the fact that we have been able to come together in support of the U.S. military for decades, even when the spirit of bipartisanship and compromise is elusive in many other areas.

We all want to ensure that America's servicemembers have the tools and resources they need to perform their duty and to protect our Nation. As we are all aware, threats against the United States, our allies, and interests persist. At a time of increasing risk and dangerous challenges to global security, the United States must lead in creating stability through a strong and modernized military.

Peace through strength is a proven concept that reinforces American deterrence and produces greater global security. That is why it is so important to, yet again, come together and advance this important bill, the NDAA.

We need to strengthen our military posture, enact policies that encourage deterrence, project leadership, and deploy innovative strategies to maximize advantages that serve our national security, reassure our allies, and help defend our freedoms and ideals at home and abroad.

The fiscal year 2021 NDAA does this by strengthening American deterrence through investing in greater capabilities in support of priorities listed in the national defense strategy and ensuring America's servicemembers are ready so, when challenged, they will prevail in any conflict.

This NDAA maintains readiness gains made over the previous years, while making significant investments in modernization and enhancing resources to better support and care for servicemembers and their families. It provides a 3-percent pay raise for our troops and reemphasizes a focus on training to ensure that our servicemembers can conduct missions safely.

It also serves the interests of our military at a time when they need vital support and assistance. I am especially pleased that the legislation continues a push I have made related to military spousal employment and also provides another step in the right direction to ensure servicemembers' families have options for high-quality and accessible childcare.

The continued commitment to reforms in the military's privatized housing and health systems reflected in this legislation are also wins for our servicemembers and their loved ones.

Additionally, this year's NDAA goes further to increase manning levels in order to better support the demand for our forces around the world.

I am pleased this bill includes a few of my priorities aimed at supporting our deployed servicemembers in the State of Arkansas.

After my recent oversight visit to Iraq, I worked to ensure that the Army

has a plan to evaluate and deploy all resources to protect our servicemembers in the theater from any kind of attack. Some of this capability is also built in my home State. I thank my colleagues for including my measure, which I believe will bring many benefits to our warfighters in the defense industry in Arkansas.

Additionally, after meeting with leaders from the 188th Air Wing at Fort Smith, it was clear to me that our servicemembers need more support when it comes to options for childcare and assistance. That is why I have worked on a provision to direct the Department of Defense to research, report, and provide recommendations to Congress on how to provide 24-hour childcare to military families who are assigned to around-the-clock rotational units at home.

I welcome the inclusion of this initiative in this year's NDAA and am grateful to the Armed Services Committee, which also recognizes its real and urgent need for our military families.

I have also filed an amendment to this year's NDAA focused on meeting the needs of our servicemembers who are undergoing routine quarantines due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of our servicemembers are required to quarantine when they are relocated to another military installation, leaving them with days to weeks of inactivity and isolation.

My amendment requires the Department of Defense to develop measures to ensure personal and professional development of our servicemembers while in quarantine, including physical activity and educational resources.

Defending our Nation, allies, and interests means providing the Department of Defense with the tools and authorities it needs to carry out that mission. This is the Federal Government's most basic function and responsibility.

It is important to get this work done in a bipartisan way and with broad agreement. My colleagues on the Armed Services Committee, under the leadership of Chairman INHOFE and Ranking Member REED, have provided a great example in sending this bill out of committee with an overwhelming vote of support. Their work has helped to ensure that the fiscal year 2021 NDAA establishes and builds on policies that strengthen the ability of the United States to safeguard the Nation and provide the support and assistance that our allies have come to depend on. Doing so helps make us and the rest of the world safer.

The fiscal year 2021 NDAA supports the national defense strategy, our servicemembers, and the broader military community. It deserves wide support in this body, and I encourage my colleagues to join me in approving the NDAA and building on the U.S. legacy of unmatched military leadership, capability, and superiority.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. INHOFE. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING JOHN LEWIS

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I want to make a couple of comments. It is going to be a very significant week. We know pretty much what we are going to be doing with the defense authorization bill, which I believe, and most people believe, is the most significant bill each year. We have things that need to be done. We came to a great agreement prior to the Fourth of July in terms of the numbers of amendments and the things we had to get accomplished, and I think there is total agreement with that.

We had a tragedy that took place during the last 2 weeks while we were in recess. One affected a friend of mine, JOHN LEWIS. We had a real interesting—the 100th Congress, we went in, I think, in 1987, and the 100th Congress had a lot of really great people.

JOHN LEWIS is one of them.

JOHN LEWIS and I became friends. You couldn't get two guys further apart philosophically than JOHN LEWIS and me. Yet we were always close. I watched how peacefully he could get things done. He is someone I got to know quite well.

We had a lot of others in that class. Jon Kyl has been very active in recent years. He came back from retirement temporarily. He was in that class. We had BEN CARDIN. He and I became close friends. I think he was in the State legislature first. Lamar Smith was one who was very, very helpful to me all those years. Lamar Smith is from South Texas. Freddie Upton—we referred to him as "Little Freddie Upton"—is probably the most recent one we had who is no longer in that same position. But JOHN LEWIS was, and I had the honor of coming to Congress and being in the same freshman class with him.

Ultimately, he was a courageous fighter in every part of his life. He fought for the civil rights movement on the bridge to Selma, as a Freedom Rider, and through his work on the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. He consistently did a great and peaceful job. He fought for his constituents and the causes he believed in. He was a fighter. He would not take no for an answer.

Up until the very end, he fought cancer. Like everything else, he fought it with courage and honor.

The conscience of Congress may no longer be here, but his legacy for his selfless service has been imparted to every one of us who served with him and got to know him well. It seems like the ones who knew him the best were those of us who served over in the other body, in the House.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. President, this week, the Senate will be resuming consideration and, hopefully, completing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021. This is not the end. This is not the completion. All this does is get it out of the Senate. Hopefully, we can do that this week, and then we have quite a few confirmations we have to do in the Senate that are very timely. We have them all lined up, and I think it is all going to work.

This National Defense Authorization Act is the one that is going to get our attention for quite a while after today. The House has to do theirs, and then we go into conference and we have a conference between the House and the Senate, which we will do and participate in.

Then, as normally is the case, it goes to the Big Four. The Big Four are the two leaders from the House and two leaders from the Senate. I have been in the Big Four, I think, for 4 years in the past. It ends up getting done.

Anytime a bill is passed for 59 years, you know it is going to pass, which is one of the problems. Everybody says: That is going to pass; therefore, let's go ahead and load on anything that I have not been able to get passed before, because you know that bill is going to get passed.

We have a lot of that going on. We have been through that. We had many, many amendments on this.

I think that we all are reflecting on the true meaning of Independence Day, and no bill is more important to protecting our freedoms than the National Defense Authorization Act. How do I know that? There is a document that not many people read any more. It is called the Constitution. It tells us what we are supposed to be doing here, and what we are supposed to be doing is, primarily, defending America.

I want to highlight the work and the bipartisan, comprehensive nature of the legislation. We have already adopted over 140 bipartisan amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act. One of the reasons for this is that we had the experience last year, and we have had it in the past, where one Member wants to get his or her amendment adopted, but they will use the leverage they have, which is to object to any other amendments coming up.

We thought, in the event that happened again, that we will put every amendment we could put in there. We solicited amendments to come from Members, and they came. The number is now 140 bipartisan amendments. That is equally divided. I have to say that the group—John Bonsell and Liz—did a great job in making this a bipartisan bill. We actually had the same number of amendments on each side. Those numbers don't include the hundreds of amendments considered in markup or Member interest provisions that were included in the base text. That was about 90 amendments. This bill was truly written by the Members,

the Democrats and Republicans in both the House and the Senate. It is my hope, and Senator REED agrees with me, that we clear another managers' package, if possible.

Speaking of Senator REED, I have to say there is not a committee out there that enjoys more bipartisan support in the Senate than this committee does. Senator REED and I have disagreed on some things, but we always resolved our problems.

This week, we are also going to vote on six amendments. Some of those amendments I support and some I don't. These are the amendments we agreed to when we departed here right before the Fourth of July.

Regardless of my feelings on specific amendments, I want to thank my colleagues for coming together. We were able to have these amendment votes. It has been at least a few years since we have been able to vote on this many amendments on the floor. What we need to have right now—and I know Members aren't in here now, but their staff is watching. Their staff needs to know that we need Members to come down and present their amendments and to speak on amendments.

We have six amendments all lined up. There are a lot of Members of the Senate who want to be heard. If you are not down here, you are not going to be heard because we are planning on doing six. Of those, we will probably do four of those tomorrow and then a couple the next day. Then, that is going to essentially be the end of it. I don't want them to come and complain to us saying that they want to be heard on amendments. This is your opportunity to do that.

The important thing is we are doing it now. We are coming together to get this must-pass bill done. Things can get pretty divisive around here sometimes, but the National Defense Authorization Act simply always comes together because it has to be done. It has been happening for 59 years. It is going to be 60 years in just a few days.

Senator REED, the Armed Services Committee, and I worked hard to make this a bipartisan bill—in the base text, in the committee mark, with amendments, and with the votes. We listened to what our colleagues asked for in their Member interest letters. We requested letters. This goes all the way back to January. We were requesting letters from individuals as to what their interests were going to be as the year pressed on.

We had a bipartisan markup where we adopted over 200 amendments from both Republicans and Democrats. On its own, this is a good, bipartisan bill. We are trying to make it better on the floor, as we adopt or reject additional amendments, which we are going to be doing tomorrow and the next day.

We are about to make it 60 straight years of passing it. We don't want to jeopardize that.

We saw what happened in the House last year when they tried to write a

partisan bill. It didn't go anywhere. Everything they wanted had nothing to do with the military. They had every liberal program in it and nothing happened. We remember some of those items. They wanted to restrict arms sales. They wanted to block our nuclear modernization, block funds for the border wall, and several other things.

I commend Chairman SMITH for returning to the bipartisanship that has long been the tradition of the Armed Services Committees on both sides of the Capitol. The House is taking up their bill on the floor this week. I wish them well. I hope they do block some of the worst amendments and the ones that would cut funding for our troops and hamstringing the ability to defend our Nation.

I am glad they are prioritizing getting this done. I am also glad that they returned to regular order; that is, considering the authorization bill before the appropriations bill. That is the order that is supposed to be done, and that is what is going to be done this time. That is the way things should work around here. We authorize first, and then we appropriate.

What we will do is what we have done every year for the last 59 years. We will come together—the Senate and the House, Republicans and Democrats—and conference our bills this week. Our votes are the next step to this goal, and that is going to happen.

There is nothing else around here that has the 60-year success streak the NDAA has. That is it. This is our sacred and profound responsibility to the 2.1 million men and women who volunteered to serve and their families.

I remember when the idea of a full volunteer force was something that was not really something that really could be done. When I was in the military, we didn't have that. It was the days of the draft. Frankly, I think there is a lot of merit to that.

It means a lot right now to the more than 700,000 civilian employees in the Department of Defense and thousands more who support our nuclear enterprise, and to all Americans that we protect them, their families, and their livelihood.

I thank my colleagues for their contributions and look forward to our continued debate on this important bill. This is the most important bill of the year.

Keep in mind that this is something we are going to get done and the next important step is this week. I appreciate all the help and remind all the Members that this is your time to speak on amendments.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I oppose the confirmation of Russell Vought to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Mr. Vought's tenure as Acting Director of OMB has been characterized by mismanagement, political corruption, and lawbreaking. He is unfit to lead OMB.

Mr. Vought played an active role in President Trump's corrupt scheme to